

Choice Points for Local Education Agencies

Local school systems still retain autonomy in some areas of the new evaluation process. Following are choice points for which systems may exercise options based on their unique system requirements:

- **The Implementation of Option II** - the only required form of evaluation for all educators is the Comprehensive Assessment Component (Option I). Systems have the option of offering professionally licensed teachers the Focused Assessment and Professional Growth Component, in addition to the Comprehensive Assessment process.
- **Locally Developed Evaluation Process** - a local school system has the option of developing an evaluation system unique to its particular school system. However, this model must be based on the same Performance Standards used in the state framework and carry the same level of validation for training of evaluators/teachers and rating consistency as the state's framework.
- **Unit/Lesson Plan** - systems may choose whether to require these, and for whom they will be required if used. Generally, systems seem to favor requiring them of all beginning teachers, some apprentice levels and teachers with new school or grade assignments. Because some systems require that lesson plans be checked weekly, they are foregoing this as a separate part of the evaluation process.
- **Non-tenured, Professionally Licensed Teachers** - as experienced teachers move within the state, they carry their Professional License with them. However, they do not retain their tenured status in their new systems. Systems have the option of offering these non-tenured teachers the option of choosing the Focused Assessment Component or requiring that ALL non-tenured employees participate in the Comprehensive Assessment Component.
- **Set Employment Standards** - The state of Tennessee sets minimum requirements for the granting of and renewal of all levels of licenses/certificates, but, local systems may always require additional and/or different standards for continuing employment in the system. This may be apparent in the ratings required to meet employment standards, the number and type of observations, and the documentation requested by school boards for specific levels of performance.
- **Format of Forms** - any local system may reformat the state's basic instruments to meet local requirements such as placement of teacher number on forms, school names, etc. These may be replicated on NCR forms, disks, or any format which is beneficial to systems, evaluators, or teachers.
- **Evaluator Teams** - this framework will be successful in situations where systems choose to use evaluation teams of central office staff and principals and/or assistant principals, as opposed to only a primary in-school evaluator. It should be considered that a team will require some communication/copies between members as to what may be agreed to in planning and modifications to that process in the Focused Assessment or what may be a focus for subsequent observations discussed in prior planning/reflecting conversations in the Comprehensive Assessment Component.

- **Integration of Professional Growth Plans with Other School Initiatives** - the state recognizes the need for integrating professional growth with other requirements schools and teachers are facing in terms of both better time efficiency and more meaningful learning. As teachers identify professional goals for both the Focused Assessment Component and the Future Growth Plan in the Comprehensive Assessment Component, needs may be identified which coincide with those already identified while gathering data in other programs. As educators research and implement strategies which may affect other programs, they may indeed gain an expertise that will allow them to serve as resident experts in meeting the requirements for such programs as School-to-Work Opportunities or the Tennessee School Improvement Planning Process.
- **Cognitive Coaching Training** - although Cognitive Coaching training is not a required component of this framework, it has served both teachers and evaluators well in learning/practicing effective questioning/reflecting skills. All levels of professionals have provided feedback to the state that this training has not only raised their proficiency level during the evaluation process, but has served as a model for all types of professional dialogues, including parent conferences, consensus-building within meetings and communication with colleagues. A system may contract for certified trainers to provide this training within a local system or request information on opportunities within their surrounding area for principals/teachers to attend a seven-day Foundation Training program.
- **Professional Growth Plans Time Frame** - as educators seriously look at researching, implementing and evaluating new ways of teaching, experience has shown that a quality plan may take more than one school year to evolve completely. Thus a Professional Growth Plan may be started as early as the spring before the evaluation cycle and extend beyond the evaluation period into the next year(s). A Summative may be held before a plan is completed by looking at the continued progress that is being made, refining the plan to accommodate new timelines/action items, and focusing on the potential for growth and for student impact. Thus evaluators will work with Professionally licensed teachers to encourage meaningful professional growth which continues from one evaluation period to the next.
- **Evaluation Time Frame** - systems may choose to begin the evaluation process in the spring before the designated evaluation cycle begins in the fall. Generally, teachers will complete the self-assessment and identify a professional goal before the end of school. This allows educators to choose professional growth opportunities for summer work and to develop plans which would need to be implemented at the very beginning of a school year, such as gathering baseline data for students.
- **Training and Teacher Orientation** - systems may choose the most effective manner of training to educate their teachers to this new framework for evaluation. It has been suggested that since one benefit of this process is in the teaching opportunities inherent in the Performance Standards, the instruments and the rubrics, this is a key component to growth and effectiveness. Thus, teacher orientation may well be an on-going consideration as systems plan inservice programs and orient new teachers to their professional expectations. In addition, systems may choose to provide new principal training through their own organization, rather than having principals commit to a schedule for the state. The person doing the training within a system would need to be certified by the state after co-training with state personnel and participating in update briefings/materials provided by the state.